

# **Elko RMP Wild Horse Herds**

**Location:** Elko County, Nevada

**Assigned Code:** (Elko Field Office)

Little Humboldt	NV-102
Rock Creek	NV-103
Owyhee	NV-101
Diamond Hills North	NV-104

## **Herd Management Area Designations (& Need for Amendment of the Elko RMP)**

The 1987 Elko Resource Management Plan (RMP) recognizes the four wild horse “Herd Areas” (HAs), which are the area of wild horse habitat in 1971 when the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act was passed. The BLM strives only to manage wild horses within an area designated as a “Herd Management Area” (HMA) by an RMP, and the 1987 Elko RMP does not clearly designate the four HAs and HMAs. Unless the Elko RMP is amended to designate an HMA to exclude management within portions of a HA, each HMA is considered to comprise the entire area of the HA. In July 2003, the Elko Field Office issued a “*Proposed Elko Resource Management Plan Wild Horse Amendment and Environmental Assessment*.” It analyzes alternatives for designation of HMAs for the Little Humboldt and Rock Creek herds. The HMAs for the Owyhee and Diamond Hills North are considered coextensive with the boundaries of the HAs, and thus are not analyzed by the EA.

## **Acreage of Each Herd Area and Herd Management Area:**

- *Little Humboldt* HA is 63, 937 acres (53,477 acres are public land)
  - Proposed HMA - 17, 151 acres (15,734 acres public)
- *Rock Creek* HA is 183, 496 acres (145,140 acres are public)
  - Proposed HMA - 126, 753 acres (102,638 acres public)
- *Owyhee* (HA and HMA) is 339,104 acres (336,262 public)
- *Diamond Hills North* (HA and HMA) is 70,479 acres (69,046 public)

## **Wilderness**

- The *Little Humboldt* and *Owyhee* HAs include portions of the South Fork Owyhee and Owyhee Canyon Wilderness Study Areas.

## **Fish and Wildlife Habitat**

- All HAs provide seasonal or year-long habitat for mule deer and pronghorn. The *Little Humboldt* HA also provide habitat for bighorn sheep.
- The Little Humboldt and Rock Creek HAs support some of the most important fisheries habitat in the Elko District. The headwaters of the South Fork of the Little Humboldt River and two of its tributaries (Sheep and Secret Creeks) are two streams in the Little Humboldt HA that support populations of Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT), a species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. In the Rock Creek HA, a number of mile of Rock and Frazer creeks are occupied by LCT, and Trout Creek has been identified as a reintroduction site in the LCT Recovery Plan.

- Redband trout, a Nevada BLM sensitive species, are found in the northern portion of the *Rock Creek HA*, in portions of Winters Creek, Four-Mile Creek, Red Cow Creek, and South Fork Owyhee River. Redband trout may also found in these streams as they flow into the Owyhee HA.

## **Livestock Grazing**

### *Little Humboldt*

- The Little Humboldt HA comprises 76% of the Little Humboldt Allotment.
- The livestock operator on the Little Humboldt Allotment is Oro Vaca, Inc.

### *Rock Creek*

- The Rock Creek HA comprises 61% of the Spanish Ranch Allotment (northern portion), and 28% of the Squaw Valley Allotment (southern part of HA).
- Ellison Ranching Co. is the livestock operator on the Spanish Ranch Allotment, and presently leases the livestock permit for the Squaw Valley Allotment from Barrick Goldstrike Company.
- By letter dated July 15, 2002, the Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with BLM's determination that approval of the Betze mining project would not adversely affect LCT based on part on construction of a Squaw Valley/Spanish Ranch Division fence by Barrick Goldstrike Company (purpose of the proposed fence is help control grazing and associated impacts to LCT streams).

### *Owyhee*

- The HA/HMA comprises 92% of the Owyhee Allotment.
- The livestock operator is Agri Beef, Inc.

### *Diamond Hills North*

- The HA/HMA comprises 81% of the Red Rock Allotment, and 59% of the Browne Allotment.
- Operators on the Red Rock Allotment are Wilfred Bailey, Paris Livestock Co. and Merkley Ranches. Rother Farms operates the Browne Allotment.

## **Population Management**

### *Little Humboldt*

- AML is 80 horses, based on May 2002 Little Humboldt Allotment Evaluation and stipulated agreement dated 7/24/2002.
- The 2003 population estimate is 175 animals.

### *Rock Creek*

- AML of 250 wild horses is proposed by the April 1997 evaluation for the Rock Creek Complex (Spanish Ranch and Squaw Valley allotments) and more recent monitoring data as of March 2000.
- The 2003 population estimate is 773 horses.

### *Owyhee*

- AML of 231 wild horses was established through an allotment evaluation and final multiple use decision (FMUD) dated April 19, 2002.
- The 2003 population estimate is 239.

### *Diamond Hills*

- AML of 37 wild horses established via 1997 agreements for Red Rock (31) and Browne (6) allotments. The 2003 population estimate is 71 wild horses.